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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001154

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TAGS: PGOV PINS PINR I2

SUBJECT: CHALABI AIDE SAYS POPULAR MOBILIZATION EFFORTS STRUGGLING

REF: BAGHDAD 1091

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Joseph Gregoire for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶11. (C) Summary: An aide to Ahmad Chalabi, chairman of the popular mobilization strand of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), told PRToff April 1 that Chalabi has been meeting with Sadr City community leaders. These leaders told Chalabi that Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM) elements who had fled Baghdad are returning because Iraqi and U.S. forces have failed to protect the Shia populace during BSP. The aide, Wameed Al-Mekhlibe, said Chalabi's team of lawyers will continue inspections of Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Defense (MOD) detention facilities in Baghdad and that Chalabi has obtained the permission from MOI and MOD leadership to carry out such inspections. Al-Mekhlibe also said that Chalabi plans to facilitate the re-opening of three Sunni mosques and one Shia Husseiniya in the next two weeks. End summary.

JAM Elements Returning to Baghdad to Protect Shia Civilians

¶12. (C) An aide to Ahmad Chalabi, chairman of the popular mobilization strand of the BSP, told PRToff April 1 that Chalabi has been meeting with Sadr City community leaders. These leaders told Chalabi that JAM elements who had fled Baghdad are returning because Iraqi and U.S. forces have failed to protect the Shia populace during BSP. The aide, Wameed Al-Mekhlibe, said that Sadr City leaders said a March 29 suicide bombing that killed about 60 people in a market in Shaab (a predominantly Shia neighborhood in northeast Baghdad, next to Sadr City) was the final straw. Al-Mekhlibe said he expects an escalation in sectarian violence as JAM elements that have been laying low return to the city and resume their activities.

Team of Lawyers to Continue Detention Facility Inspections

¶13. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said Chalabi's team of lawyers will continue inspections of MOI and MOD detention facilities in Baghdad and that Chalabi has obtained the permission from MOI and MOD leadership to carry out such inspections. The aide, Wameed Al-Mekhlibe, said the lawyers would inspect the MOD facility at Muthanna Airport in Baghdad, MOI Headquarters, a joint MOI/MOD facility in Kadhamiya, and perhaps a few other facilities. (Note: Chalabi's team of lawyers tried to piggyback an inspection of the Kadhamiya facility carried out by an MOD team supported by U.S. advisors March 22 (reftel), but security forces did not allow them to enter because they did not have paperwork from the ministries allowing them to carry out inspections. End Note.)

¶14. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said the prime minister's office provided Chalabi with 100 million Iraqi dinars (about \$71,430) to pay for staff salaries, life support and supplies for the popular

committees, effort. Al-Mekhlibe said the lawyers have not yet been paid, but will soon be paid from this money. He added that Chalabi will rent another house in Mansour to use as a headquarters for the lawyers and the popular committee liaison officer meetings. Al-Mekhlibe said Chalabi will use the Mansour rental house PRToffs visited March 21 as a second office rather than continuing to run popular mobilization activities out of the house.

More Mosque Re-Openings on the Way

¶ 15. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said Chalabi is working on re-opening three Sunni mosques and one Shia husseiniya within the next two weeks. He said the facilities will be in Sadr City, Amel and Shaab.

Popular Committees Work with IA on Food Ration Distribution

¶ 16. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said the popular committee in the Mansour district has been cooperating with the Iraqi Army to distribute food rations from the Ministry of Trade (known as the public distribution system). He said that the committee facilitated the delivery of rations to 12 distribution agents in Ghazaliya, where security conditions have prevented delivery for several months. Al-Mekhlibe added that the fact that intervention by the Iraqi Army is necessary to secure the delivery of food rations indicates that the BSP is failing in west Baghdad.

Aide Discusses IDP Issues

BAGHDAD 00001154 002 OF 002

¶ 17. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said Chalabi will ask the prime minister for 100 million Iraqi dinars (about \$71,430) for the popular committees to distribute to internally displaced persons (IDPs). He said he does not expect the funds to be provided because the national government has thus far provided few resources for popular committee efforts.

¶ 18. (C) Al-Mekhlibe said addressing IDP issues in west Baghdad is critical to the success of the BSP. He said that when Shia families were driven from their homes, Sunni insurgents, many of them from Abu Ghraib and Falluja, seized the houses and now use them as bases of operations. He said that some squatters are Sunni families displaced from pre-dominantly Shia areas of east Baghdad, but many are insurgents or poor families simply taking advantage of the situation. Al-Mekhlibe also said IDPs will not return to west Baghdad unless U.S. forces are there to guarantee their safety.

Bio Note

¶ 19. (C) Al-Mekhlibe is a Sunni (the son of a Sunni father and a Shia mother) who lives in west Baghdad. His wife, a Kurd, is currently living in Kirkuk with their children for security reasons. Before working for Chalabi, Al-Mekhlibe says he worked for Erynes, a British security firm operating in Iraq.

Comment

¶ 10. (C) Al-Mekhlibe's comments on the progress of the BSP in general and popular mobilization in particular were decidedly pessimistic. Al-Mekhlibe said the popular committees, efforts are continually plagued by lack of resources because few Iraqis are willing to risk being associated with BSP without receiving a salary. He also repeatedly commented that there is little the popular committees can do when security conditions prevent participants from leaving their homes due to fears for their personal safety.

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